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ABSTRACT

This document describes a home-based enrichment program for preschool children in Israel. The Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) provides weekly packets of educational activities to mothers and their educationally disadvantaged children of 4 to 6 years of age. Families selected for the program are of Afro-Asian origin, have less than 10 years of education and have low incomes. The mother who joins HIPPY meets weekly, either individually or in a group, with a paraprofessional aide, who instructs her in how to administer the materials to her child. Aides are selected and supervised by local coordinators who are guided by a regional coordinator who in turn is selected by the national administrator of HIPPY. The effects of the program have been studied since 1969. Generally, the studies indicate that HIPPY improves disadvantaged children's school performance. Further, the data from the HIPPY program show that the impact of the program can be increased through additional home-based activities with the mother. Participating mothers appear to change their behavior and attitudes, improve in self concept and participate increasingly in away=from-home activities. It is suggested that the basis for the program's success is that parents can see positive changes in their children and can anticipate their future success in school. (Author/RH)

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HIPPY, A Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters *

Avima D. Lombard

I would like to tell you about an enrichment program developed in Israel for preschool children. The program is HIPPY, a Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters. It was developed in 1968-71 at the Hebrew University School of Education's Research Institute for Innovation, sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women.

HIPPY is a home-based enrichment program in which a mother works with her young child from the time he is four to six years old, on a particular set of educational activities. She receives these materials in weekly packets from a paraprofessional aide, herself a mother of a preschool child and a member of the same community. The aide is selected by a professional coordinator, chosen locally, whose qualifications include higher education and experience in working with mothers and their children. This local coordinator is guided in her work by a regional coordinator who is selected by the national administrator of HIPPY from among the local coordinators. The regional coordinator supervises the local coordinators in the 20-25 locations that make up her region and works in conjunction with the national administrator, who is based at the Research Institute, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The program is aimed at educationally disadvantaged children. Families selected for the program are of Afro-Asian origin, have a low level of education (less than ten years) and fall into the lower ranges of the economic scale. They are generally large, intact families, where five or more children per family is common, and homes are small, often three rooms or less.

A mother who joins HIPPY meets weekly with the paraprofessional aide, who instructs her in how to administer the materials to her child. These weekly

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meetings alternate between private home visits and group meetings. The aide visits the mother at an appointed time every other week, bringing with her the workbook and packet of materials for that week. She uses role-playing to instruct the mother in their use, the aide and the mother taking turns playing the roles of mother and child. This ensures that the mother is fully familiar with the materials. When the mother is illiterate or for some other reason unable to cope with written materials alone, an older sibling chosen by the mother assumes the teaching role, and the training session with the aide takes place with this sibling, but in the mother's presence. The mother is encouraged to participate to the limit of her abilities, since it is she who is the major focus of the program.

In the course of each contact there is time to discuss problems which bear on both the mother's and the child's participation in the program, such as difficulties with specific activities or the child's lack of concentration. The problems often surface when the aid checks through the previous week's workbook; they may also be raised by the mother herself.

The Ministry of Education provides the list of eligible families from among those whose children are registered in local preschool classes. The local HIPPY coordinator makes the initial contact with each family in a home visit, at which time she explains the program to the mother and the mother in turn decides whether she wishes to join.

When making her first visit to a family, the local coordinator also tries to do an early assessment on the mother as a possible paraprofessional aide, and discusses the possibility with her if she feels that the mother would function well in this role. The mothers who are selected to serve as aides are trained by the coordinator in weekly in-service training meetings.

Each mother who contracts to join HIPPY must commit herself to regular attendance at the bi-weekly meetings with her aide and the five to ten other

mothers in the aide's care, and to a minimal token participation fee. At the start of each meeting the aide reviews, with each mother, her child's work for the previous week, sharing problems with the other mothers from time to time as they arise. In the discussion that follows, mothers may share information on on problems and suggest "solutions that work" from their own experiences. The group as a whole then reviews the next week's materials, using the same role-playing technique employed by aide and mother in the home.

In the second part of the group meeting, which is directed by the local coordinator, several aides and their mothers join together in a general educational activity. This may be a lecture, a demonstration, or an activity relevant in some way to the parental role. Topics are suggested by the aides, the local coordinator, or the mothers; they include health and hygiene, children's books and games, the school system, home handicrafts, home economics, preparation for holidays etc. The sustained absence of a mother from her group meetings, particularly in combination with her not working steadily with her child at home, may result in her being asked to leave the program - although considerable effort would first be expended by the aide to help the mother to remedy the situation.

The effects of HIPPY on children have been systematically studied over the years. The original study was conducted in the Hatikva quarter of Tel Aviv during the years 1969-1973. There were 140 preschool children in the study, of whom 60 children were in HIPPY in addition to preschool. Examination of the school performance of all of the children over the years indicated that children who had home instruction performed better than those who did not. In second grade, a year after their completion of the program, the home instructed children performed significantly better on tests of Math and Reading achievement. These differences are found again in the fifth and ninth grades. However, these later comparisons do not produce differences which are statistically significant. Replication studies have confirmed the original findings that HIPPY improves disadvantaged children's school performance.

The children are now in ninth grade and we find that the HIPPY participants,

like their American counterparts who were in Head Start, are significantly less apt to be found in special education classes or to be held back in grade. In the light of the fact that all the Israeli children studied had at least one year of prekindergarten, the differences found are of particular interest. The data reported by the Consortium on Developmental Continuity (Lazar, et al, 1977) give clear evidence of the impact of preschool on disadvantaged children. The data from HIPPY show that the impact can be increased through additional home-based activities with the mother.

As could be expected, HIPPY also has an impact on the participating mothers. From reports by HIPPY mothers and aides, as well as from coordinators and other community representatives, it appears that mothers who participate for two or more years do undergo changes in behavior and attitudes, the most evident of which are:

1. They view their children differently in that they perceive them more as individuals, express more warmth to the target child, and evince more interest in their children's education. They say such things as:

.... Now she wants to draw, to work, to be active. She has learned colors and geometric forms, and it was only after starting the program that she began collecting and glueing things. Before she used to do that only in nursery school I didn't know that she needed to work and draw at home too. Her vocabulary has grown.

- I see my child enjoying his work and I enjoy that.

- I spend more time with my child, and this gives me a good feeling and encourages her.

2. The regularity and intensity of their participation increases over time, i.e., they are more likely to complete the weekly assignment with their children, to attend the group meetings more regularly, and, once there, to participate more actively.

3. Their view of themselves changes, and this change is accompanied by a change in how they are viewed by their families. Mothers report that they feel more appreciated at home.

- A husband spoke of how pleased he was with the resul s of the program, said he has a new appreciation of his wife.

- A father makes sure his wife is not disturbed during her work with the HIPPY child. He brings in the washing, prepares tea and provides small things necessary, such as glue and pencils, so his wife will be able to work steadily with the child.

In a small study undertaken to examine the impact of HIPPY on mothers' self concept, an Israeli adaptation of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965; Frankel, 1970) was administered to fifty mothers when they began HIPPY, and in the following two years. Mothers who participated in HIPPY for two or more years improved their self-concept, while those who did not stay in the program showed a drop in their self-concept. The differences between the two groups of mothers was statistically significant.

4. There is an increased participation in away-from-home activities. More mothers seek and participate in educational programs for their own advancement. They are more active in community activities.

Three out of four mothers in one first-grade parents' committee were found to be HIPPY participants. HIPPY mothers of children in another first-grade class organized a committee to work with the principal and some of the teachers in their school on a program to continue HIPPY when they 'graduated' at the end of the year.

Aides reported mothers who, when faced with the challenge of working on the HIPPY materials with their children, opted to enrol in evening classes so as to acquire the reading skills necessary to work without the assistance of an older

child.

The data on the impact on mothers are extensive and varied. The examples cited above merely highlight the areas of major impact. The mothers freely speak of their sense of accomplishment and pleasure in their participation in the program.

HIPPY aides are themselves mothers of preschool children, and participate in the program both as mothers and as teachers of other mothers. In the course of their work they undergo the same kinds of changes as do all the mothers. For them, however, the program provides a much more intensive impact, producing additional changes:

1. The aides acquire new status and respect in their community. An aide reported her feelings about this as follows:

   - Today, when a child meets me in the street and calls out to me 'teacher, I've finished the workbook, could you bring me another?' I am very pleased to hear him call me this way. I am a simple housewife who began to work and to go out of the house because of HIPPY. I feel wonderful. Until yesterday I was this boy's neighbor; today I am his teacher.

2. The aides develop skills in dealing with problems arising out of the teaching situation. An aide who worked with a young Indian mother of four who could neither read nor write explained and read out the story for the week, moving about and dramatizing all the actions in order to help clarify the words and thereby making it possible for the mother to tell the story to her children.

3. The aides acquire increased self-confidence, both in themselves as women and in their work as aides. They especially note the relationship between this newly found self-confidence and their sense of making a contribution to their community:

   - The program has made me more independent, more sure of myself, more aware of exactly what I can contribute to someone else.

- I have a feeling of making a contribution to the group, my self-confidence has grown, and I have learned patience and understanding.

4. There is a change in the relationship between the aides and their husbands. While the initial reactions of husbands is frequently one of impatience and jealousy when their wives are involved with things out of the home, most of the aides report improvement in the relationship over time.

   - Evening work is a problem for my family, but the big plus is that my husband now assumes more of his share of family obligations. He feeds and puts the children to bed. For me that's the greatest thing. And I know that, although they keep it a secret, he and the children are proud of me.

5. The aides' work in HIPPY arouses their desire for further education. They seek out and attend community courses in a variety of subjects and have been instrumental in providing the impetus for the provision of special enrichment courses for HIPPY aides around the country.

This brief report on HIPPY has been presented as an example of a successful home-based educational program which provides parents with learning activities to do with their children in addition to what the children learn in their preschool classes. The participation of both mother and child in these graded HIPPY activities produces a positive interactive effect. As the mother observes her child's mastery of each task her sense of satisfaction grows, and this, in turn, enables her to be a better teacher for her child.

A world of caution is appropriate at this point. Parents of disadvantaged children participate in parent-education programs under the assumption that in so doing they are contributing to their child's future success. If their participation does not bring about changes in the child's school performance, there is likely to be an increased feeling of inadequacy and failure, and this, in turn, may result in a pulling back from further contact with the educational establishment. To the extent that parent-school communication is important for stability and continuity in the child's school career, the parent-education program will have proven to be

countereffective for the child.

We, in HIPPY feel that the contract we offer participating mothers is honest and carefully thought through. There is little chance that the parents will fail to see positive changes in their children and we know that the children have a better chance for school success.

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